

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

148

February 22, 2017

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W. 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

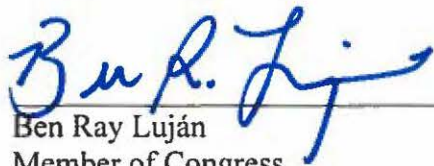
We write to encourage you to take the next steps to increase transparency and accessibility for the online political file information currently required by Commission rules. We have long supported the public's right to know who is paying for the advertisements – such as issues ads – that are pervasive during elections. Additionally, the public should be able to easily access this online information in machine-readable format.

The Media Bureau took initial steps toward the first goal last month when it resolved long-pending complaints against various TV stations regarding the disclosure of required information in the station's political files. We believe that the clarifications released by the Bureau will not only help broadcasters better understand their responsibilities, but will also provide the public with essential information. We were disappointed by your recent decision to set aside the decisions of the Media Bureau, however, we support your call for the full Commission to vote on these clarifications in the near term in order to remove any process concerns.

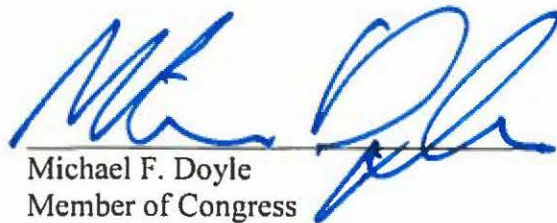
We also believe that now is the time to move forward on the other issues related to the political file in order for true transparency. We believe that the Commission currently has the authority under the Communications Act to require the disclosure of the specific donors to entities or groups that sponsor issue advertisements. Under current practice, stations are only required to provide a list of the chief executive officers or board of directors for any entity that sponsors an issue ad on the station. Although the Bureau's recent clarifications provide for additional responsibility for stations to seek additional information if not initially provided, a list of officers for an entity does not provide the full picture of who is funding that advertising that is intended to influence the public. This should not be a partisan matter, and we would like to work with you on this issue.

The Commission also can increase the accessibility of the information that is included in the online political file by requiring that all of the data is machine-readable. Currently, the public can only really access information by searching through each station's individual file. Machine-readability is essential to be able to easily aggregate the data. Again, we look forward to working with you to make this a reality for the online political and public files for all broadcast stations.

Sincerely,



Ben Ray Luján
Member of Congress



Michael F. Doyle
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



Peter Welch
Member of Congress



John Yarmuth
Member of Congress



John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



Gene Green
Member of Congress



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

April 10, 2017

The Honorable Anna G. Eshoo
U.S. House of Representatives
241 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Eshoo:

Thank you for your letter urging the Commission to take additional steps to increase transparency and accessibility for online political file information.

The Commission is continuing to modernize its processes to make political files more accessible to the public. The Commission took the first step to modernize its public file rules for broadcast television licensees in 2012, moving television public files that previously were retained at stations' local main studios to an online, Commission-hosted database. TV broadcasters completed their transition to the online file in July 2014. Moving to an online filing process made it easier for consumers to access information about their broadcast services without having to travel to the station's main studio and reduced the cost of broadcaster compliance.

In January 2016, the Commission expanded the move to online filing to cable, radio, and satellite operators. Satellite operators, and large cable and radio stations completed this transition, effective December 2016. Cable systems with fewer than 5,000 subscribers have until March 1, 2018 to begin placing political file material in the online public file, except systems with fewer than 1,000 subscribers, which are exempt from all online file requirements. All non-commercial radio broadcast stations, commercial radio broadcast stations in the top 50 Nielsen Audio markets with fewer than five full-time employees, and all commercial radio broadcast stations in markets below the top 50 or outside all markets have until March 1, 2018 to begin using the online public file.

On January 31, 2017, the Commission eliminated two public inspection file rules: (1) the requirement that commercial television and radio broadcast stations retain, and make available to the public, paper copies of letters and emails from the public; and (2) the requirement that cable operators maintain for public inspection the designation and location of a cable system's principal headend. Eliminating these requirements will further reduce regulatory burdens without adversely affecting the general public.

These changes collectively enable full public inspection files to be available online and further the FCC's recent progress towards modernizing its public inspection file rules.

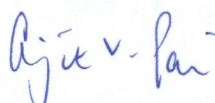
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addressed significant issues that had not been previously addressed by the full Commission; it thus should not have been released at the staff level. Instead, under FCC rules, new or novel issues must be addressed by the entire Commission. My office is currently reviewing the previous order and considering next steps.

Finally, the Commission staff is continuing to examine the feasibility and costs associated with making online political files machine readable. Although no decision has been made in this area, I can assure you that the Commission will continue its ongoing efforts to modernize its political and public file requirements where it is appropriate in order to facilitate access for consumers and reduce regulatory burdens on broadcasters and MVPDs.

I appreciate your interest in this matter as your views are very important and will be considered as part of the Commission's review. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ajit V. Pai". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ajit" and last name "Pai" clearly visible.

Ajit V. Pai

P.S. Congresswoman, thank you for your very kind note about my designation as Chairman! I've enjoyed working with you on issues as varied as public safety and 5 GHz spectrum, and look forward to collaborating in the time to come.



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

April 10, 2017

The Honorable Mike Doyle
U.S. House of Representatives
239 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Doyle:

Thank you for your letter urging the Commission to take additional steps to increase transparency and accessibility for online political file information.

The Commission is continuing to modernize its processes to make political files more accessible to the public. The Commission took the first step to modernize its public file rules for broadcast television licensees in 2012, moving television public files that previously were retained at stations' local main studios to an online, Commission-hosted database. TV broadcasters completed their transition to the online file in July 2014. Moving to an online filing process made it easier for consumers to access information about their broadcast services without having to travel to the station's main studio and reduced the cost of broadcaster compliance.

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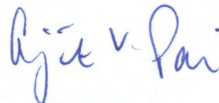
Page 2—The Honorable Mike Doyle

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Sincerely,



Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

April 10, 2017

The Honorable Diana DeGette
U.S. House of Representatives
2368 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman DeGette:

Thank you for your letter urging the Commission to take additional steps to increase transparency and accessibility for online political file information.

The Commission is continuing to modernize its processes to make political files more accessible to the public. The Commission took the first step to modernize its public file rules for broadcast television licensees in 2012, moving television public files that previously were retained at stations' local main studios to an online, Commission-hosted database. TV broadcasters completed their transition to the online file in July 2014. Moving to an online filing process made it easier for consumers to access information about their broadcast services without having to travel to the station's main studio and reduced the cost of broadcaster compliance.

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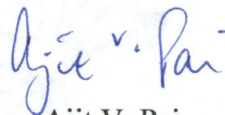
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Sincerely,


Ajit V. Pai

P.S. Congresswoman, I look forward to working with you in the time to come. (In fact one of my process reform initiatives was inspired by some questions you asked at a past oversight hearing.) Don't hesitate to call me if I can be helpful!



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

April 10, 2017

The Honorable Ben Ray Luján
U.S. House of Representatives
2231 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Luján:

Thank you for your letter urging the Commission to take additional steps to increase transparency and accessibility for online political file information.

The Commission is continuing to modernize its processes to make political files more accessible to the public. The Commission took the first step to modernize its public file rules for broadcast television licensees in 2012, moving television public files that previously were retained at stations' local main studios to an online, Commission-hosted database. TV broadcasters completed their transition to the online file in July 2014. Moving to an online filing process made it easier for consumers to access information about their broadcast services without having to travel to the station's main studio and reduced the cost of broadcaster compliance.

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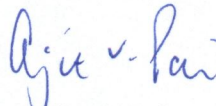
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Sincerely,


Ajit V. Pai





FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

April 10, 2017

The Honorable Gene Green
U.S. House of Representatives
2470 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Green:

Thank you for your letter urging the Commission to take additional steps to increase transparency and accessibility for online political file information.

The Commission is continuing to modernize its processes to make political files more accessible to the public. The Commission took the first step to modernize its public file rules for broadcast television licensees in 2012, moving television public files that previously were retained at stations' local main studios to an online, Commission-hosted database. TV broadcasters completed their transition to the online file in July 2014. Moving to an online filing process made it easier for consumers to access information about their broadcast services without having to travel to the station's main studio and reduced the cost of broadcaster compliance.

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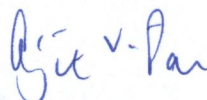
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Sincerely,



Ajit V. Pai

P.S. Congresswoman, I look forward to working with you!
Don't hesitate to let me know if I can be helpful on
issues of interest to you and residents of the 29th
District.



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

April 10, 2017

The Honorable Jerry McNerney
U.S. House of Representatives
2265 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman McNerney:

Thank you for your letter urging the Commission to take additional steps to increase transparency and accessibility for online political file information.

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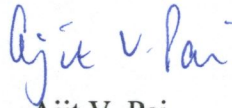
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Sincerely,


Ajit V. Pai





OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

April 10, 2017

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives
2444 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Sarbanes:

Thank you for your letter urging the Commission to take additional steps to increase transparency and accessibility for online political file information.

The Commission is continuing to modernize its processes to make political files more accessible to the public. The Commission took the first step to modernize its public file rules for broadcast television licensees in 2012, moving television public files that previously were retained at stations' local main studios to an online, Commission-hosted database. TV broadcasters completed their transition to the online file in July 2014. Moving to an online filing process made it easier for consumers to access information about their broadcast services without having to travel to the station's main studio and reduced the cost of broadcaster compliance.

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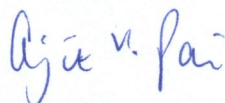
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Sincerely,



Ajit V. Pai

P.S. Congressman, please don't hesitate to get in touch if I or the FCC generally can be of assistance on matters of importance to you and the 3rd District.



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

April 10, 2017

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky
U.S. House of Representatives
2367 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Schakowsky:

Thank you for your letter urging the Commission to take additional steps to increase transparency and accessibility for online political file information.

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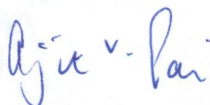
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Ajit V. Pai

P.S. Congresswoman, please don't hesitate to get in touch if I or the FCC generally can be helpful on matters of importance to you and residents of the 9th District.



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

April 10, 2017

The Honorable Peter Welch
U.S. House of Representatives
2303 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Welch:

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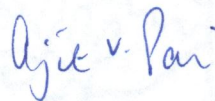
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Finally, the Commission staff is continuing to examine the feasibility and costs associated with making online political files machine readable. Although no decision has been made in this area, I can assure you that the Commission will continue its ongoing efforts to modernize its political and public file requirements where it is appropriate in order to facilitate access for consumers and reduce regulatory burdens on broadcasters and MVPDs.

I appreciate your interest in this matter as your views are very important and will be considered as part of the Commission's review. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,



Ajit V. Pai



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

April 10, 2017

The Honorable John Yarmuth
U.S. House of Representatives
131 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Yarmuth:

Thank you for your letter urging the Commission to take additional steps to increase transparency and accessibility for online political file information.

The Commission is continuing to modernize its processes to make political files more accessible to the public. The Commission took the first step to modernize its public file rules for broadcast television licensees in 2012, moving television public files that previously were retained at stations' local main studios to an online, Commission-hosted database. TV broadcasters completed their transition to the online file in July 2014. Moving to an online filing process made it easier for consumers to access information about their broadcast services without having to travel to the station's main studio and reduced the cost of broadcaster compliance.

In January 2016, the Commission expanded the move to online filing to cable, radio, and satellite operators. Satellite operators, and large cable and radio stations completed this transition, effective December 2016. Cable systems with fewer than 5,000 subscribers have until March 1, 2018 to begin placing political file material in the online public file, except systems with fewer than 1,000 subscribers, which are exempt from all online file requirements. All non-commercial radio broadcast stations, commercial radio broadcast stations in the top 50 Nielsen Audio markets with fewer than five full-time employees, and all commercial radio broadcast stations in markets below the top 50 or outside all markets have until March 1, 2018 to begin using the online public file.

On January 31, 2017, the Commission eliminated two public inspection file rules: (1) the requirement that commercial television and radio broadcast stations retain, and make available to the public, paper copies of letters and emails from the public; and (2) the requirement that cable operators maintain for public inspection the designation and location of a cable system's principal headend. Eliminating these requirements will further reduce regulatory burdens without adversely affecting the general public.

These changes collectively enable full public inspection files to be available online and further the FCC's recent progress towards modernizing its public inspection file rules.

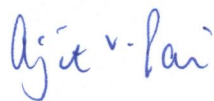
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Sincerely,



Ajit V. Pai

P.S. Congressman, don't hesitate to get in touch if I or the FCC generally can be helpful on matters of importance to the 3rd District. Even as a Harvard alum, I'm always willing and able to help Yalies when the need arises!